



City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development

D. M. Sugimura, Director

DESIGN
REVIEW

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3016870

Address: 4519 18th Ave NE

Applicant: Matt Driscoll

Date of Meeting: June 16, 2014

Board Members Present: Ivana Begley
Eric Blank
Julia Levitt
Martine Zettle

Board Members Absent: Cristina Pizano

DPD Staff Present: Beth Hartwick

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: LR3

Nearby Zones: (North) LR3
(South) MIO-65-LR3
(East) LR3
(West) LR3

Lot Area: 8,638 sq.ft.

Environmentally

Critical Areas: None

Access: The site abuts 18th Ave NE and an improved alley to the west.

Current

Development: Two single family residences converted to multifamily and boarding house uses.



Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character: The site is located in the area unofficial known as “Greek row”, just a block north of the University of Washington campus. The green leafy block has a mixture of fraternities and sororities in larger structures, along with a few of the original single family houses that were built in the early 20th century. What is consistent along the blockface are low retaining walls at the sidewalk and generous front setbacks. In contrast the heavily used alley is devoid of vegetation and consists of surface parking creatively laid out to maximize the number of cars that can be parked.

The existing on site structures were both built as single family residences, in 1908 and 1921. Directly to the south is the Sigma Chi fraternity, a four-story, Tudor revival style structure designed by J. Lister Holmes in 1928. To the north of the site is a 1921 built two-story single family residence used as a residential annex to the Delta Zeta sorority’s main structure to the north. Across the alley is the three-story brick SAE Alumni Associate fraternity which was constructed in 1925, and the wood sided three-story Kappa Delta Sorority, built in 1930. Directly across 18th Ave NE is the Theta Xi fraternity, a three story building, designed in the Gothic and Tudor revival styles in 1926 by Schack, Young & Myer.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project is for a four to five story structure(s) with 25-33 units and 14-15 parking stalls underground accessed off the alley. The units would have 2-4 bedrooms with private bathrooms and a shared kitchen/dining/living area.

The back third of the site is level with the alley and slopes down to the small retaining wall along the sidewalk by approx. 8 to 10’.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING June 16, 2014
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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number 3016870 at this website:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp.

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Mailing Public Resource Center

Address: 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000

P.O. Box 34019

Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The applicant presented three options. In all options a level of underground parking was accessed off the alley.

The applicant called Alternate 1 the “Pods”. The scheme consisted of four buildings, the two front and two back buildings being connected with an open stair. Common amenity space was

located along the south property line and between the front and back structures. A departure from façade length requirements was requested.

The applicant called Alternate 2 the “I”. The code compliant scheme showed one building with a modified I shaped plan with an open hallway the length of the structure. Common amenity space was located along the south and north property lines.

The applicant called Alternate 3 the “Breakaway”. The preferred scheme presented one building with a modified C shaped plan with an open hallway running diagonally through the building. Common amenity space was located facing south in the hollow of the C shape. Departures from façade length and rear setback requirements were requested.

PRESENTATION

Materials will include brick and wood siding to compliment the materials on the block. Paving and fences will mimic the older structures.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Did not support the proposed flat façade or minimal setback from the street.
- Encouraged a design that is consistent with the existing structures on the block.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance. At the end of the meeting the Board directed the applicant to return for a second EDG meeting.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE June 16, 2014

- 1. FRONT SETBACK: The Board felt the design did a good job of addressing the relationship to the properties to the north and south but needs more consideration of how the structure will relate to 18th Ave NE. The Board noted that 18th Ave NE feels ‘narrow’. (The street right-of-way width is 50’ which is 10’ less than the standard width of 60’ for nonarterial streets in a LR3 zone.) Having a structure set back only 5’-10’ as proposed in the concepts, will create an imposing wall in relationship to the existing structures which are setback much further from the street. (CS2.A.1, PL1.A.1, PL1.I.i, DC3.C.1))**
 - a. Provide a scheme that shows a significant setback on 18th Ave NE that will fit within the existing context of the generous front setbacks. (CS2.B.3)
 - b. Respect and respond to the unique character of the street. The setbacks of the existing buildings allow for street front activities. (PL1.A.1)
 - c. Provide open space facing the street instead of the proposed open space located along the south property line. (PL1.C.1)

2. **MASSING: The Board debated the massing of the front façade. There was some support for the breakup of the front façade and questioning if the breaks worked given the massing of other large building on the street. There was concern about the irregularity with the breakups, a more formalized mass may be better. The following guidance was provided. (CS2.A.2)**
 - a. Move the design in the direction of a less modern, more formalized architectural massing that fits within the massing found in the neighborhood context. (CS3.A.1)
 - b. Avoid mimicking the existing massing but use it as a cue to inform the design. (CS2.D.1)
 - c. Do not break up the front façade but push it back from the street. (CS2.A.2)
 - d. Maintain the upper level setback. (DC2.A.2)
3. **RELATIONSHIP TO THE STREET: The current stoops or stairs up to the existing building on the site follow the topography of the slope up from the sidewalk. The Board questioned what entering the building would feel like. (CS2.B.2)**
 - a. Clearly identify how the structure will interact with and meet the street. (PL3.A.4)
 - b. Limit the cut into the slope for lobby access. (CS2.B.2)
4. **ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT & MATERIALS: The Board advised the applicant to choose the exterior material palette wisely as that will help determine the integrity of the modern form within the existing context. (DC4.A.1)**
 - a. Strive towards a design that is more 'statuesque'. (DC2.B.1)
 - b. Use brick as an exterior material in a traditional way, not in a whimsical way. (DC2.D.2)
 - c. Maintain the shed roofs and overhangs. (DC2.I.i)
 - d. Keep the parking entry as proposed, as this is the most appropriate location. (DC1.B.1)

For the second EDG Meeting the applicant should provide the following:

- a. Provide a scheme that shows a significant setback on 18th Ave NE.
- b. Clearly identify with sketches how the structure will interact with and meet the street and the existing context in the alley.
- c. Provide a section showing the relationship of the proposed structure to the existing structures/context to the north and south at a scale that clearly shows elevation changes.
- d. Provide a diagram showing the location of the existing windows in relationship to the proposed massing.
- e. Provide solar studies showing the proposed massing's impact on the surrounding sites.

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The Board carefully considered the design guidelines and determined the following guidelines should be considered in addition to the guidance listed above.

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines are summarized below. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

CONTEXT & SITE

CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.

CS1-C Topography

CS1-C-1. Land Form: Use natural topography and desirable landforms to inform project design.

CS1-C-2. Elevation Changes: Use the existing site topography when locating structures and open spaces on the site.

University Supplemental Guidance:

CS1-I Streetscape Compatibility

CS1-I-i. Solar Exposure: Minimizing shadow impacts is important in the University neighborhood. The design of a structure and its massing on the site can enhance solar exposure for the project and minimize shadow impacts onto adjacent public areas between March 21st and September 21st. This is especially important on blocks with narrow rights-of-way relative to other neighborhood streets, including University Way, south of NE 50th Street.

CS1-II Landscape Design to Address Special Site Conditions

CS1-II-i. Existing Trees: Retain existing large trees wherever possible. This is especially important on the wooded slopes in the Ravenna Urban Village. The Board is encouraged to consider design departures that allow retention of significant trees. Where a tree is unavoidably removed, it should be replaced with another tree of appropriate species, 2 ½ inch caliper minimum size for deciduous trees, or minimum size of 4' height for evergreen trees.

CS2-II-ii. 17th Ave NE Boulevard Character: The 17th Avenue NE (boulevard) character, with landscaped front yards and uniform street trees, is an important neighborhood feature to be maintained.

CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

CS2-A Location in the City and Neighborhood

CS2-A-1. Sense of Place: Emphasize attributes that give a distinctive sense of place. Design the building and open spaces to enhance areas where a strong identity already exists, and create a sense of place where the physical context is less established.

CS2-A-2. Architectural Presence: Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly.

CS2-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces

CS2-B-1. Site Characteristics: Allow characteristics of sites to inform the design, especially where the street grid and topography create unusually shaped lots that can add distinction to the building massing.

CS2-B-2. Connection to the Street: Identify opportunities for the project to make a strong connection to the street and public realm.

CS2-B-3. Character of Open Space: Contribute to the character and proportion of surrounding open spaces.

CS2-C Relationship to the Block

CS2-C-2. Mid-Block Sites: Look to the uses and scales of adjacent buildings for clues about how to design a mid-block building. Continue a strong street-edge and respond to datum lines of adjacent buildings at the first three floors.

CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale

CS2-D-1. Existing Development and Zoning: Review the height, bulk, and scale of neighboring buildings as well as the scale of development anticipated by zoning for the area to determine an appropriate complement and/or transition.

CS2-D-2. Existing Site Features: Use changes in topography, site shape, and vegetation or structures to help make a successful fit with adjacent properties.

CS2-D-5. Respect for Adjacent Sites: Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy of residents in adjacent buildings.

University Supplemental Guidance:

CS2-IV Height, Bulk, and Scale

CS2-IV-i. Reduce Visual Bulk: Special attention should be paid to projects in Map 4 of the full Guidelines to minimize impacts of increased height, bulk and scale as stated in the Seattle Design Guideline. In order to reduce the impacts of apparent building height and bulk at specified zone edges listed above, the following alternatives should be considered:

1. Along zone edges and specified streets, step back upper floors above 40', or modify the roofline to reduce the negative effects of the allowable height limit.
2. Along specified corridors, a gradual setback of the building's facade above 40' in height from the street, alley or property line may be considered.
3. In exchange for setting back the building facade, the Board may allow a reduction in the open space requirement.
4. Access to commercial parking on corner lots should be sited and designed in a manner that minimizes impact on adjacent residential uses.

CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes

CS3-A-1. Fitting Old and New Together: Create compatibility between new projects, and existing architectural context, including historic and modern designs, through building articulation, scale and proportion, roof forms, detailing, fenestration, and/or the use of complementary materials.

CS3-A-2. Contemporary Design: Explore how contemporary designs can contribute to the development of attractive new forms and architectural styles; as expressed through use of new materials or other means.

CS3-A-3. Established Neighborhoods: In existing neighborhoods with a well-defined architectural character, site and design new structures to complement or be compatible with the architectural style and siting patterns of neighborhood buildings.

University Supplemental Guidance:

CS3-I Architectural Elements and Materials

CS3-I-i. Incorporate Local Architectural Character: Although no single architectural style or character emerges as a dominant direction for new construction in the University Community, project applicants should show how the proposed design incorporates elements of the local architectural character especially when there are buildings of local historical significance or landmark status in the vicinity.

CS3-I-iii. Historical Character: When the defined character of a block, including adjacent or facing blocks, is comprised of historic buildings, or groups of buildings of local historic importance and character, as well as street trees or other significant vegetation (as identified in the 1975 Inventory and subsequent updating), the architectural treatment of new development should respond to this local historical character. New buildings should feature a combination of traditional and contemporary materials employed in a manner that reflects the character of historic buildings in the vicinity.

PUBLIC LIFE

PL1 Connectivity: Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.

PL1-A Network of Open Spaces

PL1-A-1. Enhancing Open Space: Design the building and open spaces to positively contribute to a broader network of open spaces throughout the neighborhood.

PL1-A-2. Adding to Public Life: Seek opportunities to foster human interaction through an increase in the size and quality of project-related open space available for public life.

PL1-C Outdoor Uses and Activities

PL1-C-1. Selecting Activity Areas: Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.

University Supplemental Guidance:

PL1-I Residential Open Space

PL1-I-i. Active, Ground-Level Open Space: The ground-level open space should be designed as a plaza, courtyard, play area, mini-park, pedestrian open space, garden, or similar occupiable site feature. The quantity of open space is less important than the provision of functional and visual ground-level open space. Successfully designed ground level open space should meet these objectives:

- a. Reinforces positive streetscape qualities by providing a landscaped front yard, adhering to common setback dimensions of neighboring properties, and providing a transition between public and private realms.
- b. Provides for the comfort, health, and recreation of residents.
- c. Increases privacy and reduce visual impacts to all neighboring properties.

PL2 Walkability: Create a safe and comfortable walking environment that is easy to navigate and well-connected to existing pedestrian walkways and features.

PL2-A Accessibility

PL2-A-2. Access Challenges: Add features to assist pedestrians in navigating sloped sites, long blocks, or other challenges.

PL2-B Safety and Security

PL2-B-1. Eyes on the Street: Create a safe environment by providing lines of sight and encouraging natural surveillance.

PL2-B-2. Lighting for Safety: Provide lighting at sufficient lumen intensities and scales, including pathway illumination, pedestrian and entry lighting, and/or security lights.

PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

PL3-A Entries

PL3-A-2. Common Entries: Multi-story residential buildings need to provide privacy and security for residents but also be welcoming and identifiable to visitors.

PL3-A-4. Ensemble of Elements: Design the entry as a collection of coordinated elements including the door(s), overhead features, ground surface, landscaping, lighting, and other features.

DESIGN CONCEPT

DC2 Architectural Concept: Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

DC2-A Massing

DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects.

DC2-B Architectural and Facade Composition

DC2-B-1. Façade Composition: Design all building facades—including alleys and visible roofs— considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned.

DC2-D Scale and Texture

DC2-D-2. Texture: Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or “texture,” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

DC2-E Form and Function

University Supplemental Guidance:

DC2-I-ii. Fine-Grained Architectural Character: Buildings in Lowrise zones should provide a “fine-grained” architectural character. The fine grain may be established by using building modulation, articulation and/or details which may refer to the modulation, articulation and/or details of adjacent buildings. To better relate to any established architectural character encountered within the community, consider the following building features:

- a. Pitched roof;
- b. Covered front porch;
- c. Vertically proportioned windows;
- d. Window trim and eave boards;
- e. Elements typical of common house forms.

DC3 Open Space Concept: Integrate open space design with the building design so that they complement each other.

DC3-B Open Space Uses and Activities

DC3-B-3. Connections to Other Open Space: Site and design project-related open spaces to connect with, or enhance, the uses and activities of other nearby public open space where appropriate.

DC3-C Design

DC3-C-1. Reinforce Existing Open Space: Where a strong open space concept exists in the neighborhood, reinforce existing character and patterns of street tree planting, buffers or treatment of topographic changes. Where no strong patterns exist, initiate a strong open space concept that other projects can build upon in the future.

DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

DC4-A Exterior Elements and Finishes

DC4-A-1. Exterior Finish Materials: Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

DC4-D Trees, Landscape, and Hardscape Materials

DC4-D-1. Choice of Plant Materials: Reinforce the overall architectural and open space design concepts through the selection of landscape materials.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

The Board's recommendation on the requested departure(s) will be based upon the departure's potential to help the project better meet these design guideline priorities and achieve a better overall design than could be achieved without the departure(s). The Board's recommendation will be reserved until the final Board meeting.

At the time of the Early Design Guidance the following departures were requested:

1. **Maximum Façade Length (SMC23.45.527.B):** The code states "The maximum combined length of all portions of facades within 15 feet of a lot line that is neither a rear lot line nor a street or alley lot line shall not exceed 65% of the length of that lot line". The applicant is proposing 86% of the facade facing the north property line be located within 15' of the property line for preferred Alternative 3 and 70% for Alternative 1 on both side facades.

The Board did not comment on this departure.

2. **Setbacks (SMC23.45.518.A):** The code requires a 10' minimum rear setback for apartment building on lots with alleys. The applicant is proposing a 5' rear setback and will increase the size of the front setback.

The Board indicated they were inclined to grant this departure to shift the massing away from the street but noted the rear setback should be no less than 5'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended the project return for a SECOND EDG.